United Nations

Press Release

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TUESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

- Special Rapporteur on human rights under Iraqi occupation to visit Kuwait.

- Iraq rejects liability for cost of destroying its chemical weapons arsenal.

- Kuwait asks United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to help prevent possible illegal sale of art pilfered during Gulf war.

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The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Kuwait under Iraqi occupation, Walter Kalin, is scheduled to begin a nine-day visit to Kuwait tomorrow at the invitation of the Kuwaiti Government. During his visit, he will collect information and evidence on human rights violations reported to have been committed in Kuwait by the invading and occupying forces of Iraq.

The Special Rapporteur was appointed in March by the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights which had strongly condemned the Iraqi authorities and occupying forces for grave violations against Kuwaitis and nationals of other States, particularly the acts of torture, arbitrary arrests, summary executions and disappearances.

The Commission had requested the Special Rapporteur to prepare a preliminary report prior to submitting a final report to the General Assembly at its next regular session and to the Commission in 1992.

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Iraq has rejected liability for the cost of destroying its chemical weapons arsenal as requested by Security Council resolution 687 (1991).

In a letter to the Secretary-General of 9 June, Iraqi Chargé d'affaires Samir Al-Nima said his Government was willing to cooperate with the United

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Nations in the destruction of its chemical weapons but was not willing to pay for the process if done by someone else.

The official said Iraq itself had the necessary expertise and technical facilities to destroy or render harmless the weapons and was ready to discuss the subject in accordance with internationally accepted procedures. Iraq's participation in the destruction process would reduce costs and save time, the letter stated.

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Kuwait has asked the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to help prevent the possible illegal sale of tens of thousands of pieces of art pilfered during the Gulf war.

The UNESCO stated in a press release that terracotta figurines, pottery, bronzes, ceramics, seals and jewels had been taken from the Kuwait National Museum. Witnesses had seen the museum being cleared out by Iraqis on 27 September, according to the Kuwaiti delegation to UNESCO.

However, the Iraqi Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Aziz A.A. Haidar, in a letter to the organization's Director-General, Frederico Mayor, said the Kuwaiti museum pieces were being "preserved in the Iraqi National Museum pending their transfer to Kuwait by mutual agreement between the two parties and under the supervision of the United Nations Secretariat".

Kuwait has asked UNESCO, under the terms of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, to assist it in recovering the artworks.

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